Book review

'Brand driven: The route to integrated branding through great leadership'

by F. Joseph LePla, Susan V. Davis and Lynn M. Parker

Kogan Page; 2003; ISBN 07494 3797 9; 350pp; hardback; £27.50

Judging by the number of books about branding that have been published in the last five years, we might be concerned about the viability of the world's forests. 'Is there any more to be said?', I ask myself. Since there are reputedly many ways to skin a cat (and, since I am an avid birdwatcher, I am rather in favour of cat skinning), I have every expectation of more books on the topic. And here in my hands is another.

'Brand Driven' is very American, using the metaphor of the car journey, from 'Why take the trip?', through 'Plan the itinerary' to 'Rules of the road', 'What are you driving?', 'Rev your engines' and 'Are we there yet?', and ending with 'The pocket travel guide to living the integrated brand'. Eighteen chapters in all, superimposed on a map of the Western USA (three of the four authors work in Seattle, Washington, and belong to a 'boutique-integrated brand strategy firm' — remind me to ask my friend Frasier whether he knows them).

The book focuses on the management skills necessary to ensure that the brand flourishes. In one sense this is a book about human resources manage-

ment. The brand is about customers' experiences with the brand/product; it is about managing the brand team; brand advocacy; commitment, communications and customer touch points; it is about communicating your destination. You get the idea.

Part II of the book comprises a series of specific applications and case studies. The applications cover 'Rerouting existing organisations' and 'The start-up leader's journey'. The case studies cover branding applied to the not-for-profit sector, healthcare branding (you may judge the American spin in this chapter by the section called 'The antidote to commodity healthcare brands'), and the mergers and acquisitions 'industry'.

This is an easily digested and easy-to-follow treatment of the subject of brand management. The one serious omission is any reference to costs. Anyone setting out on this particular journey should be under no illusion — successful brand development requires substantial investment. Be warned, and don't forget to fasten your seatbelt.

Michael Thomas
Editorial Board